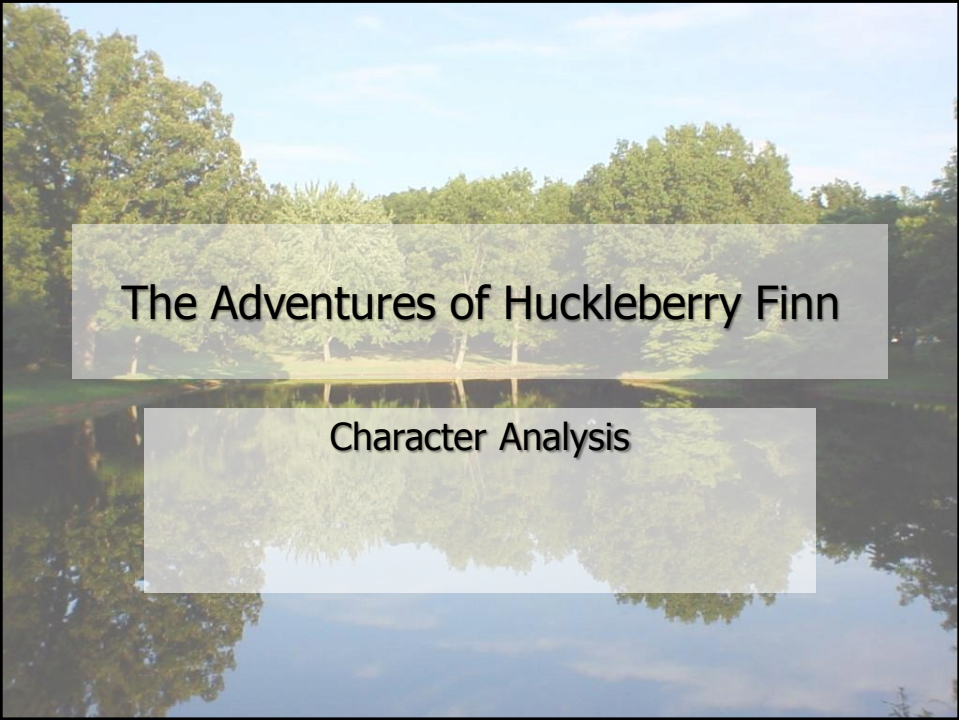
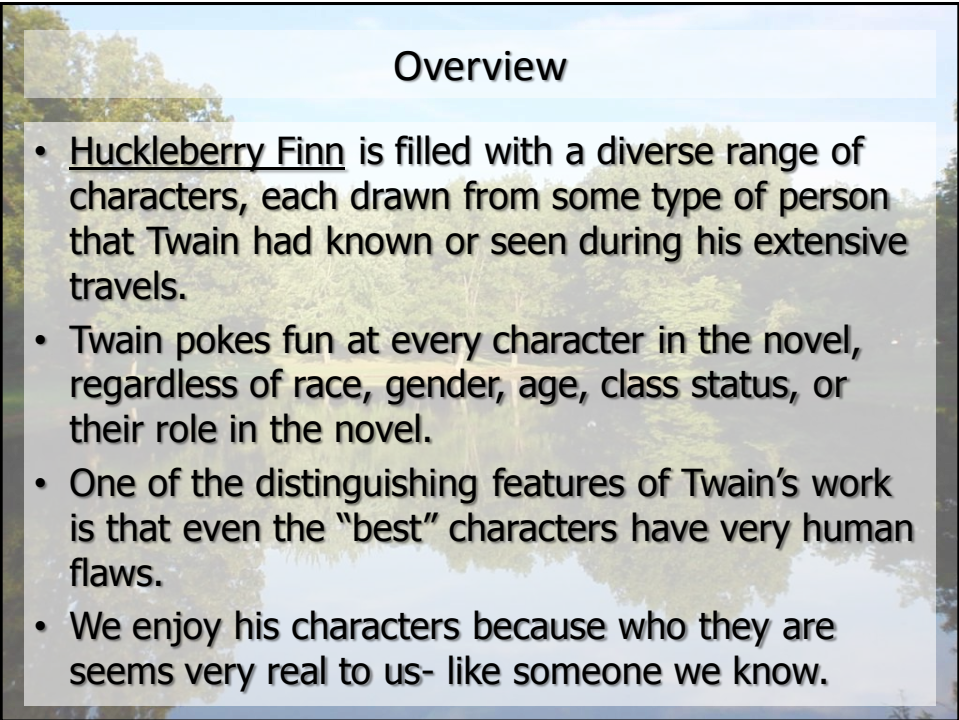




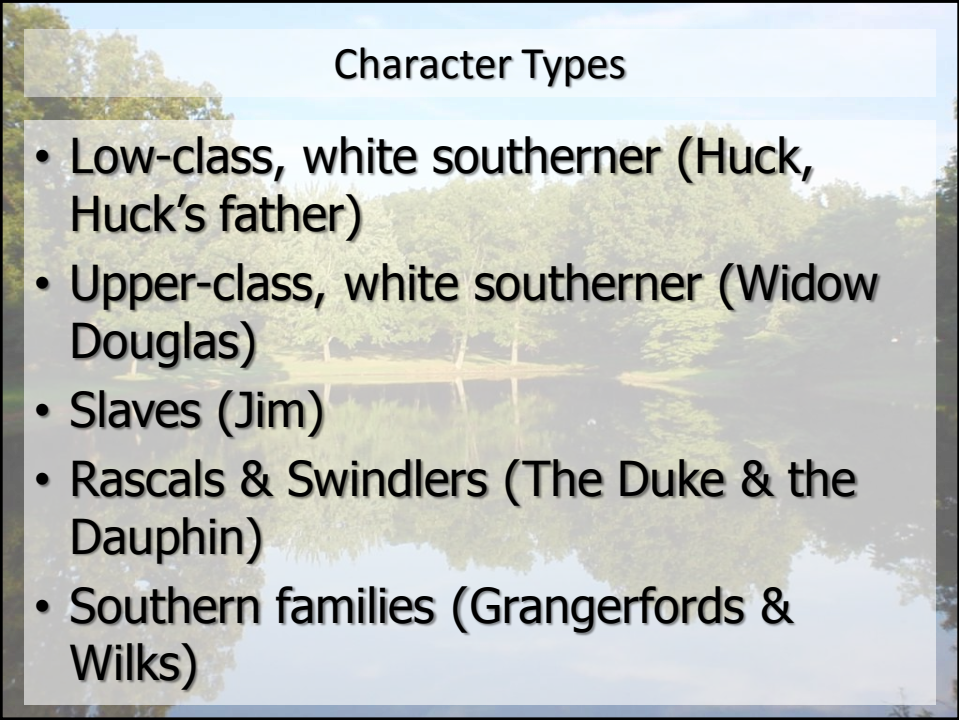
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Character Analysis



Overview

- Huckleberry Finn is filled with a diverse range of characters, each drawn from some type of person that Twain had known or seen during his extensive travels.
- Twain pokes fun at every character in the novel, regardless of race, gender, age, class status, or their role in the novel.
- One of the distinguishing features of Twain's work is that even the "best" characters have very human flaws.
- We enjoy his characters because who they are seems very real to us- like someone we know.



Character Types

- Low-class, white southerner (Huck, Huck's father)
- Upper-class, white southerner (Widow Douglas)
- Slaves (Jim)
- Rascals & Swindlers (The Duke & the Dauphin)
- Southern families (Grangerfords & Wilks)



Character Analysis

HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Huckleberry Finn: Name Origins

- The term **huckleberry** originated as a term for a type of berry, which is small and dark; the term came to mean anything that was small in size.
- After Twain used it, **huckleberry** became a sign of affection or friendship, e.g. *I'll be your huckleberry*.

Huckleberry Finn: Roles

- Huck is the *protagonist* and *narrator*, as the novel is told from a *first person point of view*.
- Huck somewhat fits the Trickster *archetype*, in that he is often mischievous, although he is usually the one who is tricked.
- Huck was typical of the *realist movement's* hero: a common person, struggling against society, unable to align personal views with society, unable to fit into society or affect society in any real way.

Huckleberry Finn: Traits

- His childhood (spent living off the land) has left him with a literal sensibility (he misunderstands figurative language & metaphors, and has no use for philosophy) and a pragmatic outlook (he has no use for "games").
- Huck is easily influenced by those around him and by his circumstances.
- He is able to adapt quite well to his surroundings—from living in a mansion to living on the Mississippi—without much trouble.
- He is superstitious, but not religious. He sees a clear delineation between the two: superstition controls powers that affect his life, whereas he has not seen that God does anything for or against him.

Huckleberry Finn: Education & Personality

- Huck is thoughtful & intelligent despite having little education.
- He believes he has no use for formal learning, although he spends a good deal of time reaching conclusions in a philosophical way.
- His lack of education sometimes causes him to reach conclusions that are unrealistic, insensible, or humorous.
- He is still a boy, and so is immature, at times. He usually does not act with malicious intent, although his actions sometimes lead to trouble & suffering.
- He often has trouble taking a stand against others, preferring instead to use trickery & subterfuge.

Huckleberry Finn: Civilization & Nature

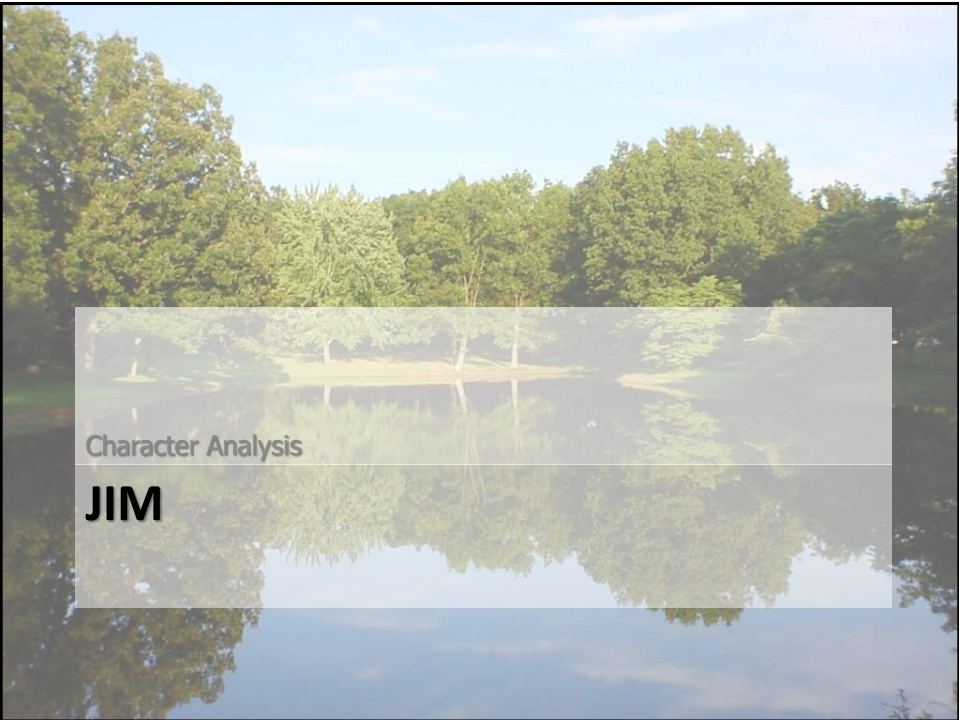
- The Widow Douglas & Miss Watson attempt to make Huck into a civilized boy by providing him an education, a home, and a sense of stability.
- Although Huck resists at first (and continues to doubt the value of religion, as well as most education), he does begin to enjoy the new lifestyle.
- After his father kidnaps him, Huck begins to revert to his former type. He does not miss school, church, nice clothes, or even the comfortable bed.
- Huck is suspicious of "civilized values" and of a society that cannot protect him from his father.

Huckleberry Finn: Slavery & Conscience

- Huck has been taught that slavery is natural. However, his interaction with Jim as they travel the river lead him to conclude that society must be wrong.
- One of the most admirable characteristics that Huck possesses is his willingness to come to conclusions that would shock society.
- His friendship with Jim, who is a runaway slave, is always tenuous in Huck's mind, because Huck is never certain if he is doing the right thing.
- He is only a boy, so these dilemmas continually surface, as he has no authority figure to offer objective guidance.
- Although Huck does not know, Jim is the only character in the novel whose mentorship comes without cost or expectation.

Huckleberry Finn: Wonder & Experience

- Huck is somewhat naïve about people, especially if he senses they come from a higher class.
- Huck is young, so his experiences are fresh for him, and his thoughtful recollection of his experiences provide the reader insight into his personality.
- Huck is shocked to see that families from respectable means can be as savage as his own father; he is also easily duped by the duke and the dauphin, and ignores Jim's hunch about them (because Jim is only a slave).
- Huck's sense of wonder in the world is both endearing and dangerous- it connects him to the reader, but also saddens the reader when Huck is unable to rise above his society's worst convictions.



Character Analysis

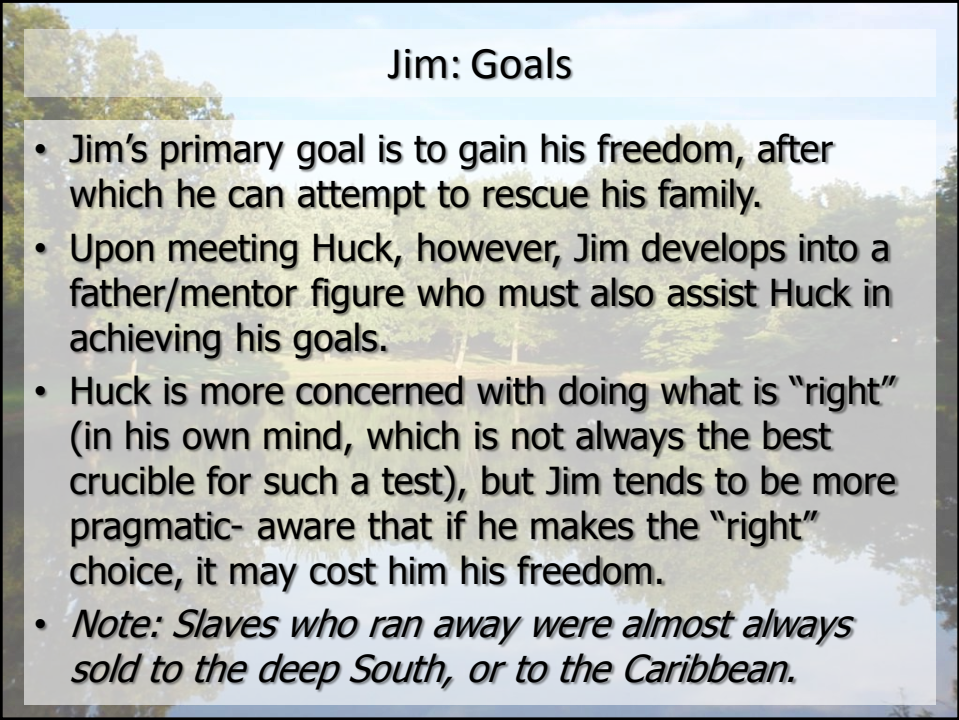
JIM

Jim: Biography

- Raised as a slave in the deep south.
- As a slave, he gained some notoriety because he claims to have been flown around by witches and he wears a five-cent piece he claims was a charm against the devil.
- Jim ran away only because he feared he would be sold, thus separating him from his family.
- Jim discovers Huck after Huck's Machiavellian escape, because they have both decided to camp out on Jackson's Island.

Jim: Personality

- Jim is passive, which was typical of many who had were second-generation slaves.
- Jim is more compassionate than Huck and is often dismayed by some of Huck's decisions and actions.
- Jim is superstitious (often to the point of being ridiculous), but viewed through the lens of Jim's knowledge of nature, his superstitions are an expression of his intelligence.
- Jim is also loyal and honorable, providing Huck the only truly good role model in the story.



Jim: Goals

- Jim's primary goal is to gain his freedom, after which he can attempt to rescue his family.
- Upon meeting Huck, however, Jim develops into a father/mentor figure who must also assist Huck in achieving his goals.
- Huck is more concerned with doing what is "right" (in his own mind, which is not always the best crucible for such a test), but Jim tends to be more pragmatic- aware that if he makes the "right" choice, it may cost him his freedom.
- *Note: Slaves who ran away were almost always sold to the deep South, or to the Caribbean.*



Character Analysis

TOM SAWYER

Tom Sawyer: Personality & Background

- middle-class, white, accustomed to stirring up trouble without receiving punishment
- archetypal trickster character, although his tricks are usually too fantastic to be practical and often amount only to daydreaming and planning
- often inconsiderate of others, having been raised as a white male from the southern middle class
- Tom seems to have less of a conscience than Huck, and is also given more to flights of fancy
- In many ways, Huck lives out much of Tom's fantasy world, as though Huck is a kind of alternate persona for Tom.

Tom Sawyer: Role

- Tom is typical of southern, middle class male of the era
- Often bored, he spends much of his time in his imagination
- His tricks and pranks and adventures are often humorous, but they also have effects Tom did not foresee (usually negative or cruel effects for others)
- Tom is a foil for Huck, because he prefers to stick to rules & guidelines (both of which are of his own making, and are based on style, rather than morality or safety), and because he is often more talk than action



Character Analysis: Townspeople

PAP FINN, WIDOW DOUGLAS & MISS WATSON

Pap Finn

- Huck's father, who is present only at the beginning of the novel
- threatened by Huck's rise in society, he kidnaps Huck and forcibly keeps him in the woods
- although Huck begins to enjoy his return to the wild, he does not trust his father's alcohol-driven violence nor does he feel secure in believing his father will not get worse
- Pap is typical of the low class southerner, threatened by culture and education, and distrusting of society and government
- The scenes with Pap illustrate Huck's childhood and enable us to understand the psychological trauma and biases he must overcome in order to be a full human being

Widow Douglas & Miss Watson

- Douglas is kindhearted, hospitable, and generous
- She attempts to live out her Christian principles by providing for Huck
- Douglas apparently did not own slaves
- Miss Watson is more strict in her Christian views, even harsh & unforgiving
- Watson's ownership of Jim demonstrates her hypocrisy (Twain disdained this sort of hypocrite)
- scholars are divided on the issue of Watson's deathbed freeing of Jim- some believe it was *deus ex machina*, and therefore unrealistic; others believe it was Twain's statement of hope that change is possible, even from unlikely persons

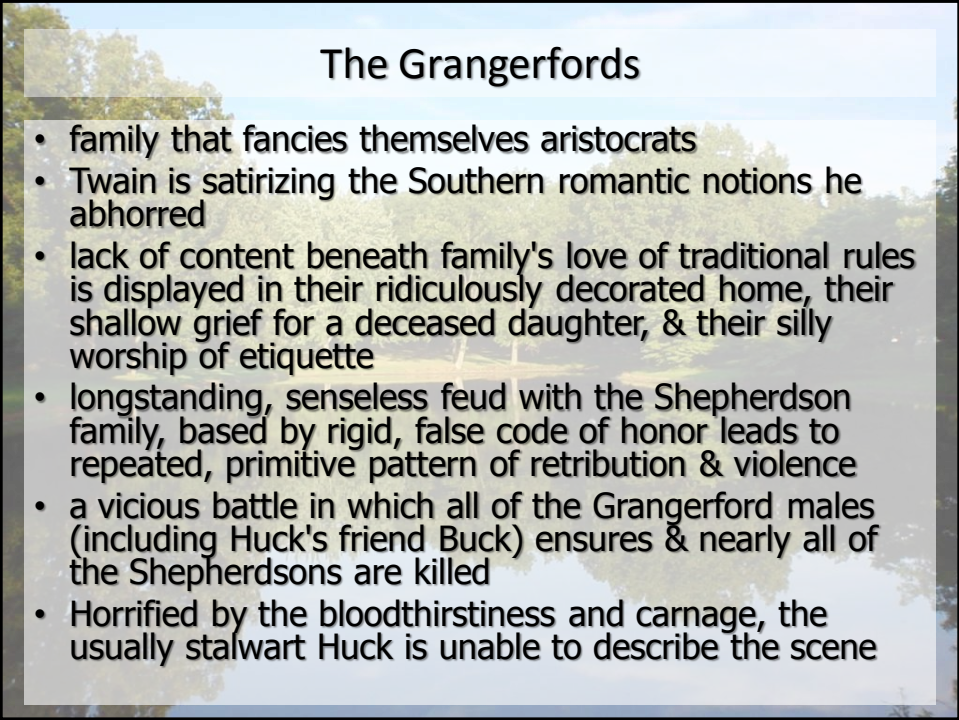
Reverend Silas & Aunt Sally Phelps

- Tom's aunt & uncle, own a farm where Jim is being kept after he is captured
- embody middle-class values: cleanliness, good manners, propriety
- yet they see nothing wrong with the institution of slavery
- provide Bible readings & prayer time for their slaves each evening, provides another example of Twain's distrust of conventional religion
- It is Aunt Sally, when Huck tells her that no one was hurt in a steamboat accident, though a black person dies, who says, "Well, it's lucky; because sometimes people do get killed."



The Duke & the Dauphin

- meet Huck & Jim as they sail northward
- comical figures who pretend to be from European nobility in order to impress & intimidate southerners
- Twain obviously felt contempt for this sort of person and felt they were prevalent enough in his time to lampoon them
- They scam those who live along the river through false science and false religion, both of which people readily buy into
- Huck despises their character, but when they are tarred & feathered, he is equally upset by the cruelty of the townspeople



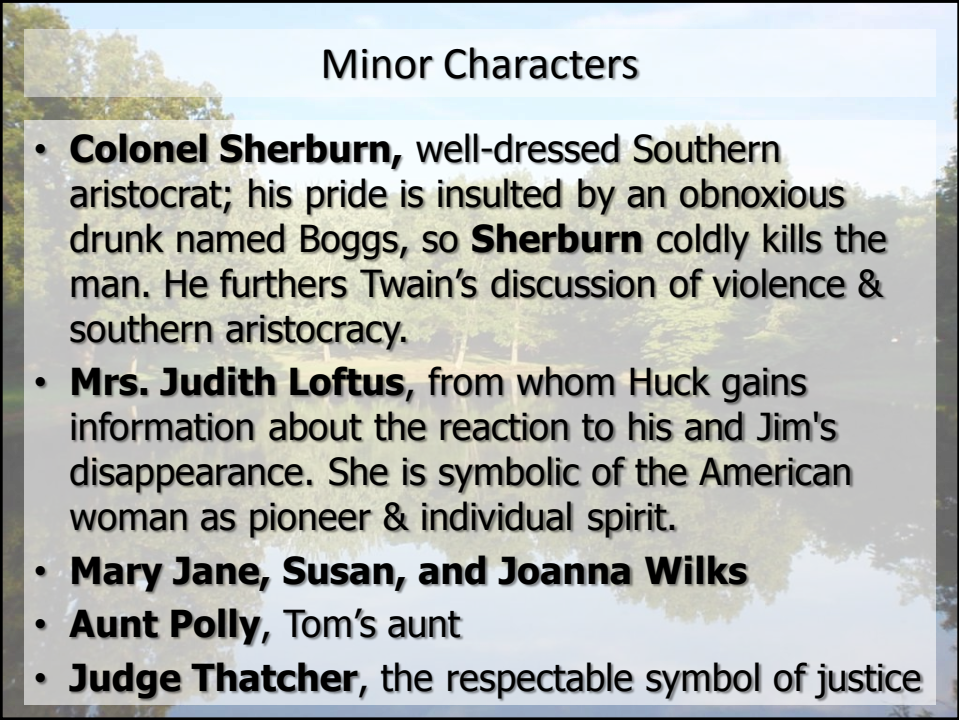
The Grangerfords

- family that fancies themselves aristocrats
- Twain is satirizing the Southern romantic notions he abhorred
- lack of content beneath family's love of traditional rules is displayed in their ridiculously decorated home, their shallow grief for a deceased daughter, & their silly worship of etiquette
- longstanding, senseless feud with the Shepherdson family, based by rigid, false code of honor leads to repeated, primitive pattern of retribution & violence
- a vicious battle in which all of the Grangerford males (including Huck's friend Buck) ensures & nearly all of the Shepherdsons are killed
- Horrified by the bloodthirstiness and carnage, the usually stalwart Huck is unable to describe the scene



Character Analysis

MINOR BUT MEMORABLE

The background of the slide features a serene landscape with a calm body of water reflecting the surrounding green trees and a clear sky. The scene is peaceful and naturalistic.

Minor Characters

- **Colonel Sherburn**, well-dressed Southern aristocrat; his pride is insulted by an obnoxious drunk named Boggs, so **Sherburn** coldly kills the man. He furthers Twain's discussion of violence & southern aristocracy.
- **Mrs. Judith Loftus**, from whom Huck gains information about the reaction to his and Jim's disappearance. She is symbolic of the American woman as pioneer & individual spirit.
- **Mary Jane, Susan, and Joanna Wilks**
- **Aunt Polly**, Tom's aunt
- **Judge Thatcher**, the respectable symbol of justice